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PRIORITY SUBJECTS

SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF POPULATION GROWTH AND CHANGING SOCIAL CONDITIONS, WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON THE FAMILY

Report of the Expert Group Meeting on the Social Consequences of Population Growth and Changing Social Conditions, with Particular Emphasis on the Family

Note by the Secretary-General

One of the proposals adopted by the Commission for Social Development by its resolution 31/3 was to choose in advance specific subjects for in-depth consideration at each of its sessions. At its thirty-second session, the Commission proposed a provisional agenda for its thirty-third session, which was subsequently approved by the Economic and Social Council in its decision 1991/226. Under item 5 of the provisional agenda, the Commission will consider in depth, as a priority subject, the social consequences of population growth and changing social conditions, with particular emphasis on the family, bearing in mind the various concepts of the family in different political, social and cultural systems. In order to prepare for the in-depth consideration of the priority subject and in line with Commission resolution 31/3, an expert group meeting on that priority subject was held at Vienna from 21 to 25 September 1992. The report of the Meeting is annexed to the present note.

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Annex

REPORT OF THE EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON THE SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF POPULATION GROWTH AND CHANGING SOCIAL CONDITIONS, WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON THE FAMILY, HELD AT VIENNA FROM 21 TO 25 SEPTEMBER 1992

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Expert Group Meeting on the Social Consequences of Population Growth and Changing Social Conditions, with Particular Emphasis on the Family was held at Vienna from 21 to 25 September 1992. The Meeting was conducted by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat. Financial resources were provided by the Government of Germany and by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Development of the Secretariat provided substantive support.

2. The object of the Meeting was to assist the Commission for Social Development in examining at its thirty-third session the topic that the Commission had identified at its thirty-second session as a priority subject for its in-depth consideration.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3. On the basis of its examination of the social consequences of population growth and changing social conditions, as they exist at present and as they are anticipated to exist in the near future, the Meeting has adopted the conclusions and recommendations provided below for consideration by the Commission at its thirty-third session. The conclusions and recommendations place special emphasis on families, bearing in mind the various concepts of the family in different political, social and cultural systems and the economic, demographic and social conditions of the societies of which families are part.

4. The Meeting concludes that the family plays a fundamental role in fulfilling the tasks of procreation and socialization, which are essential to the survival of societies; in contributing to the economic well-being of societies and individuals; and in providing social and emotional support that is basic to the security of individual family members. It recommends that the Commission should urge Governments to develop family policies aimed at strengthening the capacity of the family to perform those functions.

5. The Meeting concludes that demographic, economic, political, organizational and environmental changes frequently exert serious negative influences on the family. It recommends that the Commission should urge Governments:

(a) To accord social policies - in particular those concerned with family-, kinship- and community-based support systems, population, and social and economic security - a priority on the national agenda equal to that accorded to policies in other urgent spheres;

(b) To coordinate and harmonize policies affecting the family in order to resolve conflicts and avoid negative side-effects;

(c) To conduct as part of the initial planning of each project or programme, an evaluation of its possible impact upon families, approving the project or programme only if the results of the evaluation suggest that there will be no harmful impact upon families.

6. The Meeting concludes that the economic well-being of the vast majority of families, as well as their ability to provide for the economic security of dependent members, depends on the health of the national economy and the

distribution of national resources. It recommends that the Commission should urge Governments to balance macrolevel economic policies, especially in countries undergoing structural adjustments, with microlevel policies to enable families and their members to participate in those adjustments in a constructive manner:

(a) By training and retraining for productive roles in the newly emerging economic and technological environments;

(b) By facilitating access to credit for small business enterprises and for entrepreneurial families and their members;

(c) By promoting cooperatives, self-help organizations and other forms of association as a means of extending the capabilities of families, utilizing organized mutual help, risk-sharing, and effective management of human and natural resources at the local level.

7. The Meeting concludes that, whether in developing or developed countries, substantial proportions of families, particularly those containing members with special needs, are unable to provide for their basic economic security, whether utilizing their own resources or market mechanisms. Redistributive public programmes are necessary to fill that gap. The Meeting recommends that the Commission should urge Governments:

(a) To extend coverage of contributory and non-contributory programmes of income maintenance as a means of economic security for the elderly, single-parent families, dependent children, persons with disabilities, and the unemployed;

(b) To carry out distributive and redistributive public programmes with complete equity in respect of gender, generation, ethnicity and other considerations;

(c) To institute mechanisms for carefully targeting non-contributory assistance and subsidies to families and individuals in need.

8. The Meeting concluded that economic well-being is neither the only nor at times the primary contribution the family as an institution makes to individual members and to society. Performance of the functions of procreation and socialization, as well as the provision of social and emotional support to members, can be greatly enhanced when families themselves are embedded in supportive kinship and community environments. The Meeting recommends that the Commission should urge Governments:

(a) To encourage programmes that contribute to strengthening kinship and community ties and to balance concerns for individual and collective interests; educational institutions and the mass media are important for creating awareness and promoting support for those values;

(b) To remove impediments and to foster conditions conducive to the emergence and involvement of self-help and mediating groups as part of the development of civil society, especially in developing countries and in those emerging from socialist, centrally planned economic and political systems;

(c) To complement voluntary efforts designed to make specialized social services such as health care and education accessible at the community level;

(d) To train and support workers indigenous to the community in order to enhance their ability to provide personalized services to individuals and families with particular needs.

9. The Meeting concludes that a large number of families are suffering severe human and material losses and are experiencing serious dislocation because of natural disasters, armed conflicts, and infringements of human rights. It recommends that the Commission should urge Governments to help organize a mix of informal and formal means of intervening in such crises in order to protect and support the affected families and individuals.

10. The Meeting concludes that a large number of ethnic groups and indigenous peoples are subject to discrimination and social conditions that are detrimental to individual and family functioning. It recommends that Governments and international organizations should pay urgent attention to the condition of those peoples and should support their efforts to achieve development, security, well-being, social justice and human rights.

11. The Meeting concludes that the participation of families and individuals in designing policies intended to solve their problems and in formulating plans for programmes that will directly affect their interests and well-being could contribute significantly to their acceptance of the solutions and programmes. Such participation would in turn enhance programme effectiveness. The Meeting recommends that the Commission should draw the attention of Governments and, through them, professionals involved in the design, administration and delivery of family and other social services, to the need to find ways to enhance meaningful participation on the part of those who benefit from such services.

12. The Meeting concludes that the economics of human resources, the influence of gender inequality on fertility behaviour and on the distribution of power and resources within families, and concern for human rights are compelling reasons for placing special emphasis on the status and role of women in society. It recommends that the Commission should urge Governments to further develop the necessary policies and educational programmes to enhance the status of women, to promote gender equality and to create compatibilities between family and work requirements for both women and men.

13. The Meeting concludes that improving the socio-economic conditions of families, providing for economic security through income maintenance programmes, and enhancing the status of women could contribute to the decline of fertility; however, the demographic situation in many countries calls for additional efforts. It recommends that the Commission should urge the Governments of those countries to enhance and strengthen their policies and programmes dealing with family planning.

14. The Meeting concludes that it was important for public policies and programmes to deal with the problems of differentials in the distribution of resources and power along cultural lines rather than functional ones such as qualifications, competence and performance. It recommends that Governments in pluralist States should pay more attention to the cultural contexts of policies and programmes and to discrepancies in programme implementation that often occur along cultural lines.

15. The Meeting concludes that public accountability is the cornerstone of good governance; without it, policies and programmes remain empty shells. It

recommends that the Commission should emphasize the need for Governments to develop effective measures to facilitate, monitor and enforce public accountability in the implementation and administration of programmes; such measures would include the introduction of a meaningful system of consistently applied rewards and sanctions, in addition to the provision of intensive training in the ethics and management of public service.

16. The Meeting concludes that the formulation of the policies and the organization and administration of the programmes mentioned in the recommendations contained in paragraphs 4-15 above call for extensive and intensive training programmes, especially in developing societies. It recommends that Governments, United Nations entities and other international organizations should collaborate in developing those programmes with the help of specialists in the appropriate fields. Emphasis should be on both practical training in workshops at the local level and on advanced training in policy and programme development at the national and regional levels.

17. The Meeting concludes that, although an abundance of accurate, timely and meaningful information need not necessarily ensure the success of policies and programmes, the absence of such information would almost certainly result in failure. There are substantial bodies of information on a number of issues raised in the recommendations made by the Meeting, but that information needs to be organized in ways relevant to the formulation of policies and programmes. In addition, there is still a need for more information on all of the issues raised in the recommendations. The Meeting recommends that Governments, United Nations entities, other international organizations and research institutions should, plan, support and conduct a programme of high-quality policy-oriented research on those issues and that the programme should include:

(a) Comparative longitudinal studies;

(b) The development and demonstration of model policies and programmes;

(c) The development of ways of replicating successful policies and programmes.

I. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

A. Opening of the Meeting

18. At the opening meeting, the Director of the Social Development Division of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs explained that, in addition to assisting the Commission for Social Development in its consideration of the priority subject, the work of the Meeting should be relevant to the preparation of the International Conference on Population and Development, to be held in 1994; the International Year for the World's Indigenous People, to be observed in 1993; the International Year of the Family, to be observed in 1994; the Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held in 1995; the Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, to be held in 1995; and the World Summit for Social Development, proposed for 1995. It would also contribute to further progress in carrying out the Guiding Principles for Developmental Social Welfare Policies and Programmes in the Near Future (E/CONF.80/10, chap. III), and related resolutions of the General Assembly.

19. The Director stated that the point of departure for the deliberations of the Meeting must be the fact that the world social, economic and political situation had undergone profound changes in the preceding decade. He said that the question before the Meeting was how to adjust policies, resources, action and society itself to deal effectively with those new conditions, particularly in the social area. Recognition of socio-cultural variety appeared to be essential to a discussion of the priority subject and emphasized a need to take an interest in indigenous approaches to the solution of social problems.

20. Volker Berger, addressing the participants at the opening meeting on behalf of the Government of Germany, stated that the subject of the Meeting required a multidisciplinary approach, since the only way to obtain a realistic picture of the personality of each individual and of the overall population was through a synopsis of the many different aspects of human life.

21. Mr. Berger said that population policy, concerned with measures predominantly intended to influence the development of population size and structure, must be distinguised from family policy, an area in its own right, aimed at protecting the institution of the family, at keeping it functioning and at safeguarding its opportunities for free development. The family had an intrinsic value that had to be protected and supported. Efforts must be made to enhance the conditions under which families assumed their responsibilities while granting them maximum autonomy, which meant that families must be allowed to participate in discussions that concerned them. The procreation and raising of children were such personal and intimate aspects of a couple's relationship that decisions on the number of children, a human right that Governments had to acknowledge, did not depend so much on biological or economic factors as on traditional social values, which were deeply rooted in collective experiences, cultural traditions, religious creeds and interpretations of the meaning of human life.

22. In his address to the Meeting, Heikki S. Von Hertzen, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of Finland, stated that history, traditions, lifestyles and habits, as well as religious and other ideological viewpoints, resulted in there being considerable variety in demographic conditions and policy challenges. Lack of economic development made it difficult even to formulate social and economic policies that did not rely on the effective functioning of the immediate and extended family, and such reliance would appear to be unavoidable for a long time to come. When one family member was in need of a great deal of care, society provided support to reduce the burden of work that fell on the other family members or a close relative, usually a woman; if that support were to be removed or weakened, differences between families and in disturbed behaviour among young people would increase considerably. Social problems would once again begin to continue from one generation to the next.

B. Attendance

23. The Meeting was attended by 13 persons serving in their individual capacity as experts. The Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs and the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Development of the Secretariat also participated (see annex I).

C. Election of officers

24. The Meeting elected Meenakashi Apte (India) Chairperson and Saad Nagi (Egypt) Rapporteur.

D. Adoption of the agenda

25. The following agenda was adopted:

1. Opening address.

2. Election of the Chairperson and Rapporteur and adoption of the agenda and schedule of work.

3. Diagnosis of the situation.

4. Draft recommendations for consideration by the Commission for Social Development at its thirty-third session.

5. Closure of the Meeting.

E. Documentation

26. Background papers had been prepared for the Meeting by participating experts and by the Social Development Division and the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs. They are listed in annex II.

F. Adoption of the report and closure of the Meeting

27. At its final meeting, on 25 September 1992, the Meeting adopted its report, including recommendations for consideration by the Commission at its thirty-third session.

II. SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION

A. Current situation of the family in the context of kinship, the community and civil society

1. Major determinants of pressure upon families

(a) Economic change

28. The structure and dynamic of the global economy continued to cause widespread poverty, which in turn was the major cause of homelessness, family disintegration, anxiety among youth, delinquency and many other social ills. The resultant dysfunction added to the increased incidence and seriousness of the various challenges that must be faced by families as support systems and to constraints upon their ability to meet those challenges.

29. Substantial shifts in economic ideology and attendant strategies were taking place. An abrupt swing had occurred from fully centralized socialist economies to forms of liberalism far more extreme than those that had existed previously in any advanced industrialized State, generally characterized by a mixed economy and a well-developed form of social partnership. Increased social disequilibrium had resulted. A small segment of society had accumulated much of the available resources, but the majority was being increasingly left behind. The middle classes had been impoverished. Those changes had important implications for economic management, for efforts to reduce the severity of social problems and for the maintenance of an effective civil society.

(b) Demographic change: the ageing of populations and families

30. Reduction in morbidity, extension of life expectancy, and change in the aspirations and behaviour of individuals, particularly women, with respect to the bearing, number and spacing of their children, had altered substantially not only the demographic condition of society, but also that of the family. As a result, the inter-generational range had increased and kin-related populations had aged.

31. The risk of widowhood had increased because of the lower life expectancy of men and their higher age at marriage. Because of their reproductive responsibilities, their employment in the informal sector or in low-paid jobs and their resulting lower status in society, most women were economically dependent on their husbands or other male members of their households throughout their lives. They had little chance of becoming eligible for pensions. But the risk of a woman outliving her husband and spending her last years without his support was increasing. Consequently, widows would have to look for support from children or other kin or to consider remarriage. Economic support might still come from male kin but emotional care and care during sickness would be provided mostly by female kin, especially daughters. The daughter in a one-child family might be expected to care for both parents and parents-in-law regardless of whether she was able or willing to do so. Moreover, more elderly women would be left on their own during their last years as the number of children continued to decrease and families continued to split due to migration and urbanization.

(c) Change in the status and condition of women

32. Change in the status of women had significantly altered perceptions and behaviour in respect of both bearing and caring for children and of family formation, affecting the ability of the family to act as a support system. The newly emerging aspirations of women had met with insufficient adaptation by men and by family and community structures, leading to higher levels of stress and dysfunction, especially among isolated women and among female heads of household, whose numbers were growing worldwide. A majority of such women lived in extreme poverty. In almost every country, there were more elderly women than elderly men. Women's lifelong contributions to society were not recognized and women remained poor and powerless.

(d) Change in individual perceptions and behaviour

33. Widespread stress arose from continued societal change. Even if eventually beneficial, change in itself created many social problems for the individual, the family and the community. In contemporary society change was continuous: most individuals were likely to face a series of crises, each calling for substantial change in perceptions and behaviour and many requiring external support. Such crisis management was most effectively provided by the family, the community and, in some cases, by social workers. There was currently much uncertainty and insecurity in former socialist countries, where citizens were accustomed to the State making all decisions. In many countries, both developed and developing, individual behaviour was shifting towards excessive individualism and away from commitment to others in the community.

(e) Change in forms of family association

34. In countries that had experienced negative population growth over a considerable period, there was an increased incidence of new forms of family

association, such as delayed marriages, high divorce rates, numerous consensual unions and single-parent households. That development had important consequences for the provision of security and welfare support for dependents, particularly frail and elderly people, children, disabled persons and the chronically ill. Similar diversification might expand rapidly among urban populations in Africa, Asia and Latin America, where a rapid decline in fertility rates had already occurred. In central and eastern Europe, family and other kinship-based support systems had suffered a considerable eclipse during the socialist period. The rapid shift to the behavioural systems of market-oriented societies might introduce the same changes in forms of family association but perhaps with more severe effect, given the possibility that feelings of responsibility for the disadvantaged and the dysfunctional might not be sufficiently developed.

(f) Change in kinship, the community and civil society

35. Families did not exist in a societal vacuum: in order to analyse their support capability it was essential to take into consideration the environment formed by the local community. A healthy civil society absorbed or prevented much of the negative impact of societal change and made use of and multiplied the positive impact. Such a society constituted a favourable environment within which individuals were able to express their solidarity with one another and to help each other to become more self-sufficient.

36. In many countries macroeconomic policies had been adopted with scant attention being paid to their microeconomic and microsocial consequences. Social institutions capable of responding to that development were put under severe pressure. Substantial changes were occurring in civil society, ranging from small-scale, local, face-to-face organizations, mainly within the family and other kinship-based groups and communities, to broader-based associations, representing the interests of larger groups. Widespread individual anxiety and stress threatened to break down community consciousness and institutions, as individuals withdrew into their own families and as concern for the collective disappeared. Consequently, the community's capacity to withstand external pressures and to respond to individual needs was diminished. Where the family and other kinship-based systems were still effective, they were able to support individuals withdrawing from communities; where there were large numbers of isolated individuals, however, the decline in communal support had severe consequences.

2. The current situation of families and communities

(a) Continuing flexibility and strength of families

37. In a highly unsatisfactory societal environment, where profound changes of a technological or organizational nature were occurring, many families were under severe stress, particularly from ageing, inter-generational conflict, and migration. Many families had withstood considerable pressure, though they had often had to make significant adjustments in the internal distribution of responsibilities and privileges. Consequently, the great strength and flexibility of the family as a primary social entity had become evident. Change need not be regarded as something that weakened society; it could be seen as an expression of the resilient and flexible nature of human relationships - individuals chose the relationships that best allowed them to achieve their objectives in a changing societal context. In many countries, the family as an institution continued to constitute an effective response to the inadequate

social security provided by the State and the market; however, many adjustments could be achieved only by imposing severe stress on individual members of society, especially women.

(b) Continuing support capability of communities

38. In many countries, individuals faced with crises or continuing disadvantages were able to turn to neighbours, friends and other community associations. Rather than collapsing or disappearing, local communities were showing strength and flexibility. A complex of rural-based associations involving the family and community was still able to provide individuals with a substantial proportion of their economic and social security and their welfare needs. Participation in both government programmes and the market was being buttressed by individuals relying on several sources of income. In many developing countries, such complexes were subject to extreme disruption by long periods of inappropriate development, as well as the more recent impact of structural adjustment and environmental destruction.

3. The continued essential role of the family in ensuring economic and social security in conditions of rapid societal change and stress

39. The family continued to be a social organization of central importance to human progress. It was the element of civil society primarily responsible for individual economic and social security. It constituted both a focal point and a buffer for stress emanating from other societal institutions.

40. The family continued to offer a secure environment for early socialization, for monitoring risk of dysfunction and for providing care for family members already suffering from dysfunction. That function was considerably shared where family-based support systems were embedded in larger kinship-based associations; where those associations had contracted to the nuclear family that function remained essential, but it might be affected by the intensity of interpersonal relationships, which might itself cause stress.

41. The contributions of the informal sector, private households and women to national economies were increasingly being recognized, though they were rarely taken into consideration in national product calculations. It was essential, in considering the important role of the family in society, to take into account the fact that each of those contributions was in fact that of a family enterprise, operating within a wider network of support provided by the community.

B. The nature of national policies concerning the condition and function of families in the context of social and demographic change

1. Economic policy: production and equitable distribution of the means for economic security

42. Further appropriate development of the economy was an absolute prerequisite for the achievement of adequate economic and social security for all, together with all that that implied for the viability of families, for the achievement of full equality between women and men, and for a favourable demographic condition. To that end, it was vital to provide individuals with sufficient incentives to increase their productivity. At the same time,

however, it was also necessary to consider the pattern of distribution of all resources being created, for of central importance to the achievement of economic and social security was equitable distribution of the national product: equitable distribution between segments of society defined on the basis of some economic, locational and ethnic criteria and, within those segments, equitable distribution between local communities and, above all, between families; and equitable distribution between generations, between women and men, between persons who were disabled and those who were not, and between those who were dysfunctional and those who were not.

43. It was essential, when considering the manner in which social and economic security might be provided, to promote and support an appropriate mix between the public sector, the market, in which full attention was necessary to the informal sector, and the non-monetized support systems within kinship-defined wider groups and the local community, whose operation should be protected and facilitated.

44. Nevertheless, the Governments of a significant proportion of the world's families and communities, particularly in developing countries, were powerless to take the macroeconomic decisions needed to establish an environment that would favour the achievement by individuals of their economic and social security. There was a need to make every effort to adjust the global economic system, which had such a pervasive negative effect upon so many societies.

2. Policy in respect of the demographic conditions of society (population policy)

45. There was strong evidence that economic and social security had the greatest impact upon individual behaviour of demographic significance and, hence, upon the resolution of problems arising from demographic conditions. Until such security is attained, however, population policy measures such as direct intervention to promote changes in fertility in the context of maternal and child health should continue to be implemented.

3. Social security policy

(a) Contributory social security programmes

46. In many countries the family and other kinship-based microlevel support systems and their extensions in the local community remained the principal organizational means of spreading risk and of providing the highest possible level of individual security. Many such indigenous social security systems had been severely damaged by recent societal change. Formal sector social security programmes, both public and private, had also suffered substantially in the preceding years. There had been insufficient development of other mechanisms provided by the market or by new forms of intermediate association within civil society. Consequently, there was a significant gap in the provision of social security. Persons without social security found themselves unable to escape from self-reinforcing poverty and destitution. There were also numerous dysfunctional conditions located in that gap, leading to a delay in demographic transition, with all its consequences.

47. A significant decline in fertility took place only when security could be ensured by means other than maintaining a large family support system; hence, adequate provision of social security might ensure a more rapid demographic

transition. Significant re-channelling of resources towards forms of government social security might show much higher returns than other attempts to change fertility behaviour. Extending formal programmes could be a means of bringing income to entire microlevel support systems rather than to individual beneficiaries alone. Innovative approaches, particularly credit and savings cooperatives, would be necessary because many potential beneficiaries had limited involvement in monetized employment. Careful targeting, limitation of duration, and links with productivity would be important. The present was an ideal time for formal social security expansion: there would be only a small (though rapidly growing) proportion of pension recipients relative to contributors.

48. In economic crisis and structural adjustment, Governments in the first instance cut back on social services, froze pensions and withdrew subsidies and tax supports for those most in need. That might not necessarily be the best solution, given the resultant high costs in terms of loss of human resources, social and political instability and, above all, the probable delay in the demographic transition, with all its societal costs.

49. In developed countries, education was necessary to avoid intergenerational conflict arising from the cost of social security and to achieve a better understanding of the true nature of relationships between social security contributions and benefits. It was necessary to promote an understanding of the need either to expect a longer working life or to accept a lower than accustomed, or lower than expected, standard of living. Difficult political choices were necessary. For example, in Germany it had been estimated it would be necessary either to double contributions to 35 per cent of the gross national product or to reduce pensions by one half; it was impossible to make a choice lying somewhere between those extremes.

50. In countries in transition from socialist to market-managed conditions, the dismantling of the public sector and its associated social security mechanisms had had extremely serious consequences for large segments of the population, given the damage suffered by the family and the destruction of civil society. That was particularly true for the old, who had been largely abandoned. The reconstitution of social security was difficult but essential if severe problems were to be resolved. Rather than being a burden, effective social security measures provided a principal means of achieving the societal stability needed for economic and political reconstruction.

(b) Non-contributory social assistance programmes

51. There were obvious limitations to extending contributory social security programmes to all segments of the population. Hence, the provision of non-contributory social assistance would appear to be an effective means of breaking into the self-perpetuating cycle of poverty. Provision of social assistance to certain individuals might be a means of reaching wider networks made up by members of the family and of other kinship-based support systems. There is some empirical evidence that cash might be the easiest form of assistance to administer and the most useful to recipients, who would be able to adopt the most flexible approach to solving their problems. Such forms of assistance should be carefully targeted and should be provided to each individual for a limited time only. Their objective should be to prevent individuals from being reduced to living in conditions where self-help was impossible and to provide support while special efforts were being made to establish or re-establish self-reliance.

4. The need for "personalized" social welfare services, directed at individuals suffering from dysfunction, anxiety and stress

52. The higher the levels of disability and dysfunction, the more severe were the constraints imposed upon the realization of human resource potential and higher individual productivity. Thus, programmes designed to prevent dysfunction or to ensure the speedy and full rehabilitation of the affected individuals would contribute to productivity and, in turn, to economic and social security and to behaviour that would result in more appropriate demographic conditions. As a basic preventive measure, there was also a need to prepare individuals to deal with constant change, to face uncertainty and to take risks. Education and the mass media might play an important role in that preparation. At the same time, social policy should be concerned with establishing a favourable context for positive and meaningful relationships between individuals and should protect them from processes that impose stress and disrupt personal relations.

53. Intervention to reduce dysfunction required much experience and understanding. In most countries, the number of specialists in that field was not sufficient to allow State-run programmes to reach more than a small proportion of those in need. Consequently, even greater value was placed on the use of indigenous institutions. An important policy objective might be to develop an improved articulation between formal and informal, or indigenous, systems in the provision of personal social welfare along the lines of the relationship between modern and "traditional" medicine.

5. Policy in respect of women's status and condition as a key factor in the achievement of economic and social security

54. Improvement in the status of women was seen to be one of the key elements of any strategy to resolve the closely interrelated questions of the provision of economic and social security, the solution of problems of a demographic nature, and the prevention of disadvantage and dysfunction. In formulating all policies it was necessary to analyse gender roles and responsibilities within each societal context. Policies should take into account the fact that women were not a homogeneous population group and should not focus on women as a target, but rather on the various constraints facing different women.

55. The function of caring for and socializing children was one of the most important in society; however, because it was largely non-monetized, it offered the persons performing it, almost all of whom were women, very little in terms of material or emotional reward. Both women and children suffered in such circumstances, with severe individual costs for them and society. Measures to facilitate women's performance of that role and to reward them for making that contribution to society would probably be extremely cost-effective, provided care was taken neither to force women into that role nor to neglect facilitating their subsequent employment in other occupations without prejudice to their long-term security.

56. Special policies were necessary for elderly women in view of the severity of their condition. The majority were excluded from pension systems because they had worked mainly in the household, in the informal sector or in unremunerated family enterprises. Consequently, pensions dependent on past wages were often unavailable to them. The delayed effects of past discrimination could not be changed but should be made less severe and such discrimination should be ended. Social intervention for the elderly was a moral issue; it

was also a means of utilizing more fully many elderly women, as well as elderly men, as human resources, that is, a means of supporting "constructive ageing". Many elderly women were still active and the considerable contribution that they could make to society needed to be facilitated, recognized, measured and rewarded.

6. Policy in respect of the family and other kinship-based microlevel support systems

57. One major task was to bring into existence or to strengthen microlevel support systems that were efficient in providing for the welfare and security of their members, while adhering to basic specifications concerning the human rights of all their members. The purpose would be to encourage individuals who were potential members (or members of such microlevel support systems who were considering leaving them because they did not serve their needs) to be better aware of the real benefits, and not just the costs, of their membership in such support systems. Incentives could be established within many policy areas.

7. Special measures for families in circumstances resulting from disasters of natural or human origin, armed conflict, and denial of human rights

58. The role of international agencies was particularly relevant to the increasing number of families affected by migration or family members, who were political, economic or environmental refugees. Particular attention needed to be given to girls and women in such circumstances. Furthermore, the coherent functioning of families in such conditions needed to be ensured.

8. Special measures for families of indigenous people and other populations subject to discrimination on the basis of ethnicity

59. In some countries, indigenous or other ethnically distinct populations constituted a substantial proportion of the national population. They continued to be the populations most deprived of basic human rights and the ones most suffering from extreme poverty, social marginalization and low levels of technology. Many were under constant threat of being forced into the more dominant elements of society. Often obliged to migrate to large urban centres under extremely hostile conditions, they had to abandon their cultural heritage, especially the structure and functions of their traditional family and kinship organizations. They had little chance of working out forms of adjustment acceptable to themselves and of combining the best of both new and old. Consequently, many indigenous cultures ran the risk of disappearing completely; yet they represented sources of creativity and innovation, in the social field and in many other fields, that humanity could not afford to lose.

60. It was important to establish and maintain an environment favourable to the effective functioning of indigenous family- and kinship-based support systems, community associations and representative organizations. But policies supportive of families and communities of indigenous people were only possible in the context of broader strategies designed to support the efforts of such people to significantly improve their own economic, social and political condition. Such policies should seek neither to assimilate indigenous people rapidly nor to fossilize them in an archaic culture; instead, they should establish an environment that would enable them, both as individuals and communities, to respondas equal partners to the opportunities and constraints resulting from change

in national society, and to formulate their own approach to achieving an equal but, if they wish, separate membership within multicultural societies. Particular attention should be given to the promotion and support of projects, programmes and associations that resulted from spontaneous initiatives taken by indigenous people themselves. Policy formulation and execution must involve the targeted populations: it was most important to renounce paternalistic and incorporationalist approaches. Increased attention should also be given to other types of ethnically distinct populations, such as the Romany in Europe and similar populations elsewhere, nomads and culturally distinct immigrants.

9. Promotion of and support for an effective, participatory and democratic civil society

61. Unlike many other institutions in society, the family had no supportive associations: it was an atomized organizational form, existing only at the basic level. Therefore, it was important for it to build up its own representational structure and voice in policy-making. Non-governmental organizations could play an important role, first as an element of mobilization and afterwards as a representative of group interests. Many non-governmental organizations, however, were at risk of becoming excessively professionalized and bureaucratized, thereby losing contact with their grass roots. Others were at risk of becoming self-serving, thereby losing accountability from the point of view of their members and constituents. Some were at risk of being co-opted or corrupted by political or economic interest groups, including those in government and public administration. Cooperatives, when truly autonomous, membership-owned and controlled enterprises and not extensions of government, could be effective economic enterprises, as well as healthy elements in civil society. They had a strong potential for improving solidarity, collective responsibility and accountability.

62. To protect the spontaneity and autonomy of all such associations, Governments should not attempt detailed regulation but should foster a favourable societal environment. Much could be achieved by means of education and the mass media to promote community awareness, mutual self-help and free association. Emphasis upon self-help, however, should not be an excuse to have no government activity at all.

63. The situation in former socialist countries was serious and was likely to be a major constraint on successful social measures. There was a need to develop an immediate, short-term approach to the construction of civil society and to promote the emergence of effective organizations. There was a need not only for appropriate external help (e.g. by international non-governmental organizations, by twin cities), but also for better coordination and harmonization of such help.

C. Prerequisites for the effective formulation and implementation of appropriate policies

1. The need to harmonize policies in respect of demographic conditions, women, social security, the family, the economy and culture

64. There were numerous points of potential conflict between policies concerned with women's condition, economic adjustment, the family, social security and indigenous people. If there was insufficient harmonization of policy objectives and means, action in one area might constrain successful action in another. Similarly, less advantage could be taken of the potential

for mutual support between different measures. For example, adjustments made to increase productivity might result in an unplanned decline in the effectiveness of social security. That, in turn, might have some undesired impact upon individual behaviour that, in aggregate, was demographically significant, thus making the achievement of population policy goals more difficult. As a result, economic goals might be even more difficult to achieve.

65. Because of their relevance to broader economic and demographic strategies, social policies merited a central position in national strategic planning. The tendency to marginalize them might have contributed considerably to serious societal problems. There was a need to carefully harmonize policies concerning family, kinship and community microlevel support systems, social security and social welfare, and demographic conditions. Proper coordination was essential between functional programmes, concerned with, for example, health, education and income maintenance, and what might be described as category-oriented and coordinative programmes, concerned with, for example, vulnerable families, disabled persons and the frail and elderly. Whereas Governments tended to have mainly short-term plans. But many of the processes that were the object of social policy, particularly demographic processes, required long periods before policy impact could be noticed and goals could be achieved; therefore, they required long-term and consistently implemented strategies.

2. The importance of giving appropriate attention to culture as a factor of central relevance to social policy

66. It was indispensable to emphasize the significance of the culture of the society whose condition and problems were the object of policy intervention and to avoid ethnocentric approaches. Even the most basic perceptions and concepts - such as the individual, the family and the community - might have different connotations in every society and community. The same might apply to perceptions of the rights and responsibilities of members within all forms of microlevel support systems and to concepts such as social welfare, disadvantage and dysfunction.

67. The question of culture was not one restricted to ethnic differences: the entire condition of populations emerging from the socialist experience and the identification of policy responses were also matters of culture, as they included quite distinctive perceptions, assumptions, attitudes and aspirations. Even in societies that were ethnically homogeneous, there were often cultural differences between populations defined in regional and socio-economic terms. The question of culture was also important with respect to differences between generations.

3. The need for accountability, transparency and efficiency in government

68. There had recently been widespread shifts towards greater democratization; that had not been accompanied by decentralization, as might have been expected, but by further centralization of state power at the expense of the autonomous functioning of individuals, families and communities. Real delegation of power by means of decentralization to local authorities and associations was still rare. It was common to find widespread government inhibition of the emergence and effective functioning of associations that truly represented the interests of individuals and that offered to them a means of helping each other to become more self-sufficient and of furthering their interests.

69. Moreover, the widespread lack of accountability in government agencies had led to inefficiency and corruption. In addition, excessive control over

organizations in civil society had impeded the performance of their role in providing support and mediation for those in need. Ineffectiveness on the part of public and civil organizations at the local level was particularly serious since they were the primary channels for services and assistance from national and international agencies.

70. Highly efficient, transparent and accountable governance at the local level was of the utmost importance; it instilled confidence and made possible an effective articulation and interaction between the public and private sectors. Therefore, particular emphasis should be given to those improvements that would enhance the ability of local authorities to provide a favourable environment for the undertaking by individuals and families of "mutual self-help" (i.e. helping each other to become more self-sufficient) and for the achievement of their own economic and social security; for family and community adjustment to changing conditions; for the activities of all supportive associations in civil society, as well as those of decentralized public programmes; for the harmonization of local governmental activities with non-governmental activities; and for the regulation of the local market. Effective people's participation was essential if efficient, responsible and accountable local administration was to exist.

4. The need to regionalize social policy and to give attention to locational factors in social policy formulation

71. Demographic and social conditions in each region were likely to vary significantly within most countries. That was true of individual requirements with respect to social security and welfare, as well as of the capabilities of the family and other kinship-based microlevel support systems. Consequently, greater sensitivity to the fact that social conditions varied from region to region was necessary and, therefore, greater regionalization of national social policies was required. Decentralization of the decision-making process must be accompanied by a corresponding decentralization of resources.

72. Most policy measures must be carried out locally. The comprehensive and simultaneous policy interventions that were needed to resolve dysfunction could be successful only by taking into consideration the particularities of local conditions, by developing very specific forms of articulation between public and private areas of policy intervention, by drawing upon indigenous arrangements for the provision of social security and social welfare support, and by facilitating the provision of support to dysfunctional persons by specialized social workers and others.

5. Information collection and research

73. Information collection, policy-oriented research and the exchange of experience were needed to ensure effective policy formulation and implementation in varied societal conditions. Basing social policy recommendations upon analogies and apparent opportunities for replication always involved enormous risk, however, particularly when there were few detailed case-studies and it was difficult to find examples sufficiently comparable in terms of their structural and cultural context.

74. Knowledge in many areas was still not sufficient to provide policy guidance. There was a continuing need for primary research and for policy-oriented analysis of results. Societal processes that were the object of policy intervention were highly complex and needed the attention of specialists in many

different disciplines; however, each discipline had distinct assumptions and perceptions that must be harmonized and integrated. It was essential to avoid expecting trends to inevitably repeat western experience: in other circumstances, other responses might be of greater policy significance.

6. The need for more effective and relevant training

75. Attention should be given not only to the effectiveness of social and community workers themselves, but to that of other specialists engaged at the microlevel in protecting and supporting disadvantaged segments of the population. Changes in training and retraining might be needed. There was a need for renewed emphasis upon regional training and research institutions. Members of indigenous and other ethnically distinct populations were in particular need of such training.

7. The need for expanded but appropriate provision of technical assistance by international agencies in the sphere of social policies

76. Technical assistance, implying the exchange of experience, was extremely difficult. Often external aid and insufficiently considered development projects had a negative impact upon the viabilility of families as support systems and upon the incentives of family members. Social behaviour, usually the target of policy change, was often so embedded in complex local societal conditions that external experience could rarely be transferred without careful consideration of the cultural constraints upon replication. Consequently, technical assistance might be most successful if it did not seek to instruct but rather to take into account the specifications formulated by the recipient populations and if it offered an opportunity for them to resolve difficulties and achieve goals by means of measures carried out under their own direction and management. The role of international organizations might best be one of fact-finding, research, the development of demonstration models in specific circumstances, and the further development and widespread promotion and diffusion of such models. They should insist upon accountability in respect of the resources provided and, given the scarcity of such resources, should concentrate their support on those institutions that had the best record of accountability and efficiency.

Appendix I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Experts

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Appendix II

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Papers prepared by experts

Meenakashi J. Apte, "Growing population and its effects on families: an Indian experience".

Claire Auzias, "Families and family policy in transition in eastern Europe: families, nationalities, religions".

Tom Gabriel, "The social consequences of population growth and changing social conditions with particular emphasis on the family".

Pedro Hespanha, "The state and the society in the provision of social welfare in Portugal".

Pedro Hespanha, "Les sociétés semi-périphériques : une régulation multiforme".

Charlotte Hoehn, "Social consequences of population decline".

Alberto Cheng Hurtado, "The Indian peoples of America: population growth and social changes".

Edwin Kaseke, "The social consequences of population growth and changing social conditions with particular emphasis on the family in Zimbabwe".

Renate Krieg and M. Schaedler, "The social consequences of population growth and changing social conditions with particular emphasis on the family: the case of the People's Republic of China".

Natalija N. Lakisa-Sachuk, "Crisis situation in the Ukraine due to transition to a market economy and the strategic social policy towards softening its negative consequences for the family and its members".

Natalija N. Lakisa-Sachuk and Nina N. Sachuk, "Position of the senior generation in the modern family problems and tasks of social policy (in the former USSR)".

Saad Z. Nagi, "Implications of societal change with emphasis on the family".

Josef Schmid, "Divergent family patterns: common social problems? A view on recent population and family trends in western Europe".

Erika Schuchardt, "Crises in our families as an opportunity for learning: the concept of a learning process for crisis management".

Papers prepared by the United Nations Secretariat

Social Development Division of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, "Relationships between demographic and social processes and social policy interventions at different stages of the demographic transition".

Division for the Advancement of Women of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, "The situation of elderly women: an application of a gender analysis on a wider generational problem".